

52

I REMEMBER YOU

By

Alvin Boretz

"I REMEMBER YOU"

A One Act Play

By

Alvin Boretz

75 Willow Road
Woodmere, N.Y. 11598
516/374-3665

(c) 1991

"ACT ONE"

It is morning in a loft in New York's Soho District. A section of the corridor is seen at stage left. The loft is filled with sculpture and art of contemporary and mixed media.

Our continuing examination of additional sculptured pieces and drawings reveals a variety of work done in stone, clay and metal. There is an acetylene torch and large upright cylinder near an iron figure in progress. Its parts seem to have been collected from a junk yard. This is no bohemian retreat for it is both the studio and home of Carrie Bennett whose success is in direct proportion to her abundant talent. At fifty, she remains an attractive woman of considerable energy and presence. Wearing plaster splattered work jeans, her hair is covered with a bandanna.

We find her pouring a cup of coffee. Replacing the bowl on the machine, she comes to the iron figure and studies her work. A moment later, a younger Carrie (as she was at twenty) enters and repeats the identical movements of filling a cup and then walking slowly around the construction. She is quite pretty and her casual outfit is that of a young woman of the sixties.

After a few moments, the older Carrie stops and steps back with a critical eye.

CARRIE OLDER

Well?

CARRIE YOUNGER

It's very interesting.

CARRIE OLDER

You can do better than that, can't you?

CARRIE YOUNGER

I think you settled for the idea but didn't really carry it out.

CARRIE OLDER

Thanks but the New York Times already has a critic.

CARRIE YOUNGER

Why bother to talk to me if you don't listen.

CARRIE OLDER

It's better than getting depressed.

CARRIE YOUNGER

Sometimes I wonder why you keep me around.

CARRIE OLDER

You remind me of my youth.

CARRIE YOUNGER

I am your youth.

CARRIE OLDER

Don't remind me.

She places the cup down dons her goggles and gloves, then turns on the torch. The younger self watches her at work.

Paul Gibson appears in the corridor searching for her door. He is in his early fifties and wears what a well dressed banker should. As he locates the entrance, he hesitates then approaches the bell. He is wrought with indecision.

A moment later the young Paul appears. He wears a sixties Princeton athletic jacket. Unaware of his presence, the older Paul removes an envelope from his jacket and studies the return address. He continues to ponder whether to ring the bell.

(Amused)
 No guts, eh?

PAUL YOUNGER
 The older Paul is startled by his presence.

PAUL OLDER
 What are you doing here?

PAUL YOUNGER
 I'm like you. Curious.

PAUL OLDER
 Do me a favor. Go away.

PAUL YOUNGER
 You think I'd miss this? Not a chance.

PAUL OLDER
 Please. I'd rather not have you around.

PAUL YOUNGER
 (Challenging)
 Whose idea was it to see her anyway?

PAUL OLDER
 That's not the point.

PAUL YOUNGER
 Don't be ridiculous. I'm the one who knows her. Not you.

PAUL OLDER
 Which one of us did she write to?

PAUL YOUNGER
 Who's the one she remembers? You or me?

PAUL OLDER
 That's unfair. Of course it's you...but it's really me.
 (Nettled)
 Look, I'm having enough trouble with this. Be quiet.

PAUL YOUNGER
 You're stalling.

PAUL OLDER
 I am not.

PAUL YOUNGER

Then ring the bell.

PAUL OLDER

I'm not sure this is the right place. I could hardly read the number downstairs.

PAUL YOUNGER

It's her all right. Only an artist could live in a dump like this. I thought we'd get mugged in the hallway.

(Admiringly)

You showed me something though. Way you handled those stairs. Pretty good for an old bastard.

He watches while the older self again hesitates when he reaches for the bell.

PAUL OLDER

She doesn't expect me.

PAUL YOUNGER

Don't be dumb. Her letter was a comeon.

PAUL OLDER

But she didn't say anything about me coming here.

PAUL YOUNGER

I thought you knew something about women. Let's go, Ace.

PAUL OLDER

You're a real big shot, aren't you?

PAUL YOUNGER

I try.

PAUL OLDER

I'm the one who has to go in there. Not you.

PAUL YOUNGER

Look, let's compromise. It's not easy for either of us.

Young Paul leans past the older self and punches the doorbell. Immediately, a loud series of "The Great Gate of Kiev" chimes from Mussorgsky's "Pictures At An Exhibition" is heard.

The roar of the acetylene torch and the older Carrie's absorption combine to prevent both her and her younger self from hearing the bells.

The two Pauls wait and then..

PAUL OLDER

(Relieved)
She's not home.

He turns to go but the younger Paul stops him.

PAUL YOUNGER

I hear someone.

He presses the button again and the bells roll through the loft. The younger Carrie hears them and taps her older self on the shoulder and calls in her ear.

CARRIE YOUNGER

The door.

The older woman turns off the torch in time to hear the last of the bells. She turns off the gas and crosses to the door.

CARRIE OLDER

Who is it?

PAUL OLDER

Paul Gibson.

CARRIE OLDER

Who?

PAUL OLDER

(Louder)
Paul. Paul Gibson.

CARRIE OLDER

Oh, my God!

In a near panic, she flees from the door throwing wild glances at herself and the mess of the loft. The chimes blast once more as the older Carrie removes her goggles and tries to become presentable. She now crosses to the door and the younger woman accompanies her. Reaching it, the older Carrie opens the several locks but then pauses.

In the corridor, the younger Paul is backing away.

PAUL OLDER

Where you going?

PAUL YOUNGER

I'll wait downstairs.

PAUL OLDER

No! Don't leave me here alone.

PAUL YOUNGER

Sorry. I don't think I can handle it.

He flees.

PAUL OLDER

Come back!

But the younger man is gone.

CARRIE YOUNGER

Open it.

CARRIE OLDER

He won't recognize me.

CARRIE YOUNGER

Of course he will. Carrie, he's not here by accident.

(impatiently)

You want him to leave?

A moment of uncertainty and then with a sudden, decisive move, the older Paul presses the bell and the sound of the chords galvanize her into suddenly reaching forward and opening the door.

As the sound reverberates and slowly fades, the older Paul looks into the room and finds the younger Carrie. He stares at her for this is the girl of his memory.

PAUL OLDER

(An expectant smile)

Carrie!

As the young Carrie moves aside and the present day woman takes her place, there is a bare trace of a rueful expression on his face. After all, he knows it was a silly little fantasy. But he is very pleased to see the older but still attractive woman standing before him.

CARRIE OLDER

Mr Gibson, I presume.

Neither moves, just taking in the other. Still unsure he offers his hand and she accepts it.

PAUL OLDER

Hard to believe I'm here.

CARRIE OLDER

(A slight smile as she has read his initial reaction)

Are you enchanted or disappointed?

PAUL OLDER

(Also a smile)

I'm thinking about it.

CARRIE OLDER

Time's up.

CARRIE YOUNGER

Don't be dumb. You're embarrassing the man.

PAUL OLDER

Let's settle for curious?

CARRIE YOUNGER

(interested)

Watch it, Carrie. This guy's no pushover.

CARRIE OLDER

You always were a gentleman so I expect the best.

CARRIE YOUNGER

What are you waiting for? His identification? Ask him in.

With below, the younger Carrie retreats to the fridge to take a soda and then curls up in a chair. The older Carrie steps aside to allow him to enter.

CARRIE OLDER

If you're not an apparition, please come in.

(Unless otherwise indicated, both young people speak only to their older selves as they exist solely in the minds and memories of the older people)

The older Paul enters and glances about with interest.

PAUL OLDER

(To the older Carrie
as he reacts to her work)

You've been busy.

CARRIE OLDER

So have you.

She is making a vain effort to straighten up the place.

CARRIE OLDER(contd)

I heard you were going to run for Mayor.

PAUL OLDER

I was until I had a poll taken that said people don't trust bankers.

CARRIE OLDER

Who'd say a dumb thing like that?

PAUL OLDER

(Amused)
How about you?

CARRIE OLDER

(Protesting)
Never.

PAUL OLDER

No? Remember the autopsy they did on a banker but they couldn't find his heart?

CARRIE OLDER

Paul....that was only a joke.

PAUL OLDER

My father never forgave you for that one.

CARRIE YOUNGER

(to Carrie Older)
Watch it, sweetie. He's got a memory like an elephant.

CARRIE OLDER

(To Carrie Younger)
I've got some serious talking to do. Why don't you get lost?

The older Paul reaches out to touch a sculpture but then hesitates.

CARRIE OLDER(contd)

(Lightly)
It won't break. Please. Look around.

PAUL OLDER

I was in my dentist's office and I saw a piece about you in a magazine. You've done very well.

CARRIE OLDER

That's one way of looking at it.

CARRIE YOUNGER

(A quick look back at Carrie Older)
The poor man just got here. Don't cry on his shoulder.

CARRIE OLDER

(More brightly)
I've got a show next month.

Congratulations. PAUL OLDER

Here's the flier. It's in Soho. A very good gallery. CARRIE OLDER

The older selves wait for each other to continue but they seem discomfited as the older Paul continues to move about the loft.

I appreciate your letter. It was very thoughtful of you. PAUL OLDER
(Curious)
How'd you hear about my wife?

I still subscribe to the local paper. CARRIE OLDER

I thought you'd burned all the bridges. PAUL OLDER
(Surprised)

A few grew back. CARRIE OLDER
(Hesitates)
I'm sorry I never met her.

Hypocrite. CARRIE YOUNGER
(To older Carrie)

Let's call it mixed emotions. CARRIE OLDER
(An involuntary reply)

The older Paul turns, unsure he has heard correctly.

Sorry? PAUL OLDER

I was thinking how hard it must be for you now. Being alone. CARRIE OLDER

It takes getting used to. PAUL OLDER
(Slight pause)
I guess you know all about that.

Do I?

CARRIE OLDER

PAUL OLDER

(Hesitating)

Well, you've been divorced for sometime now and as you just said, it's not easy being alone.

CARRIE OLDER

(An edge)

I was only married for six years.

PAUL OLDER

I'm sorry. I didn't realize.

CARRIE OLDER

I've had a life since then. A damn good life.

PAUL OLDER

(Slightly taken aback)

I'm sure you have.

CARRIE OLDER

Maybe you've forgotten. I'm an artist, remember? "Wild parties and all those crazy people I ran around with"?

PAUL OLDER

That was all a long time ago.

CARRIE OLDER

Well, I haven't retired. I use my time damn well and if there's an empty space, there are a hundred ways to fill it.

The young Carrie rises quickly.

CARRIE YOUNGER

(A warning)

Better call time out.

CARRIE OLDER

Excuse me, this apron is wearing me down.

The younger woman follows the older as she crosses to a clothes tree where she hangs up the leather apron she's been wearing.

CARRIE YOUNGER

You better shut up! He looks like he's been hit by a truck.

The door opens and the younger Paul peeks in.

CARRIE OLDER
He looks so damn successful.

PAUL YOUNGER
(Toward his older self)
Hey!

The older Paul is trying to figure out how to handle the situation.

PAUL YOUNGER(contd)
How's it going?

He enters and takes in the older woman.

PAUL YOUNGER(contd)
Wow!

PAUL OLDER
What?

PAUL YOUNGER
She's different.

PAUL OLDER
It's thirty years, for God's sake.

PAUL YOUNGER
(Grudgingly)
Yeah, I know. But I thought maybe...you know....maybe she'd be a little more youthful.

PAUL OLDER
Grow up, will you? People change.

PAUL YOUNGER
Too damn fast if you ask me.

PAUL OLDER
Well, no one's perfect, so shut up!

CARRIE YOUNGER
(To her older self)
You just going to leave him standing there?

The younger Paul is surprised to see the older couple aren't speaking.

PAUL YOUNGER

What's the matter? No communication here?

As the older Carrie comes back he simultaneously turns to her.

PAUL OLDER

I didn't mean to offend you, Carrie.

CARRIE OLDER

I suppose not but it sounded like you thought I've just been moping around, waiting for life to happen.

PAUL OLDER

(Amused)

That was never your problem.

CARRIE OLDER

But it was yours. Getting you to take chances...shake things up. Sometimes you made me so angry, I thought I'd explode.

PAUL YOUNGER

She's nuts. I was never that dull.

PAUL OLDER

Don't be so sure.

CARRIE OLDER

My husband died. Not me. So if you think the widow wore black, forget it. I've been doing fine all these years.

PAUL YOUNGER

I said coming here was a mistake. Who needs this?

His older self has listened to her sudden outburst quietly.

PAUL OLDER

I'm glad to hear that, Carrie. It's good to have a busy life.

(Glances at watch)

Work's gone well for me too. As a matter of fact, I have to meet an associate in a little while. I suppose I shouldn't have stopped by like this. But as I happened to be in town and your address was on the letter..I took the chance.

He turns for the door then
hesitates.

PAUL OLDER(contd)

Good luck with your show. I hope it's a success.

(A last look around)

I'm glad to have seen you again. I'd looked forward to it.
And I do like your work. Very much.

He opens the door, then looks
back at her.

PAUL YOUNGER

(To the older Paul)

Comon. Let's go.

PAUL OLDER

Goodbye, Carrie.

CARRIE YOUNGER

(A yell)

Carrie!

CARRIE OLDER

(Almost a cry)

Paul!

He stops.

CARRIE OLDER(contd)

Could you do me a favor?

PAUL OLDER

Of course.

CARRIE OLDER

The taxi.

PAUL OLDER

(Puzzled)

I'm sorry?

CARRIE OLDER

You remember it. My english taxi. The Austin.

PAUL OLDER

What about it?

CARRIE OLDER

I need your help.

PAUL OLDER

You've still got that wreck?

CARRIE OLDER

Watch your language. It's my baby.

PAUL OLDER

It can't be alive. Impossible.

CARRIE OLDER

It's parked right down the street.

PAUL OLDER

Talk about loyalty. You must've spent a fortune on it. Sending to England for parts all this time?

CARRIE OLDER

I'm devoted to it but I think it's getting old.

PAUL OLDER

You mean it doesn't run anymore.

CARRIE OLDER

It's fine only it stalls a lot.

She hurries to her bag and looks for her car keys.

CARRIE OLDER(contd)

Could you please have a look? You were always so good with it.

PAUL YOUNGER

Tell her to give the thing a decent burial.

She returns with the keys.

CARRIE OLDER

I'm never going to give it up.

PAUL YOUNGER

How come she didn't treat you that well?

PAUL OLDER

(Hesitating)

It just stalls? That's it?

CARRIE OLDER

Nothing else. It runs like a dream. Paul, please. I'm lost without it.

She thrusts the keys at him.

PAUL OLDER

I've got to see this.

PAUL OLDER

It's like going back to my youth.

PAUL YOUNGER

It's reincarnation.

The older Paul starts out.

CARRIE OLDER

Wait! I don't want you to get dirty. You'll need some rags.

She rummages in a box and finds a few.

CARRIE OLDER(contd)

These all right?

PAUL OLDER

Fine, thank you.

She hurries to open the door.

CARRIE OLDER

It's only a few doors away.

The older Paul exits and the younger man follows, narrowly missing her closing of the door.

CARRIE YOUNGER

Whew! What a recovery. The ball was going out of bounds and you saved it just in time.

CARRIE OLDER

That damn car is always breaking down. Thank God.

With below, she unearths some makeup from her bag and begins repairing her face. The young Carrie watches her like a kid sister.

CARRIE YOUNGER

What are you doing?

CARRIE OLDER
Getting ready for Round Two. Isn't it obvious?

CARRIE YOUNGER
I mean why you so angry with him.

CARRIE OLDER
I don't know. It just got away from me. For a minute, I saw him back then. Everything all figured out. He always thought he knew what I was feeling...what I had to do. So damn sure of himself.

CARRIE YOUNGER
Are you sorry you wrote the letter?

No reply.

CARRIE YOUNGER(contd)
Well? Are you?

CARRIE OLDER
(Impatiently)
I'm not sure if the condolences were for him or me.

CARRIE YOUNGER
He seems old.

CARRIE OLDER
(Defensively)
He looks pretty energetic to me. He always was good at sports. Captain of the lacrosse team at Princeton.
(A sudden worried thought)
I hope he knows what he's doing.

CARRIE YOUNGER
You said he was mechanical.

CARRIE OLDER
Men like to hear that. How do you think I keep this place fixed up?

(Peers in mirror searchingly)
Okay now?

CARRIE YOUNGER
I wouldn't use so much paint.

CARRIE OLDER
You will.

She brushes furiously with the blush.

CARRIE YOUNGER

I wish you hadn't yelled at him.

The older woman looks away reflectively.

CARRIE OLDER

I think I'm getting cold feet.

CARRIE YOUNGER

Then you don't really like him.

CARRIE OLDER

I thought Dear Abby was a much older woman.

CARRIE YOUNGER

Well, do you?

CARRIE OLDER

Do I what?

CARRIE YOUNGER

Like him?

CARRIE OLDER

Don't mix me up. How can you tell anything at your age? There were so many things we were going to do and then it all fell apart. Now, I'm different. He's different. How can I know him. All I can do is try to remember and I can't even be sure of that anymore.

The door opens and the older Paul enters. He carries some dirty rags and has some grease smears on his face and shirt. The younger Paul enters.

PAUL OLDER

Who's been taking care of the Austin? A butcher. The timing is way off.

CARRIE OLDER

Is that all? Thanks. I thought it was something critical.

PAUL OLDER

It sure surprised me. It looks in damn good shape.

PAUL YOUNGER
Not the way it was when I took care of it.

The older Paul proffers the dirty rags.

PAUL OLDER
Where would you like these?

The older Carrie opens a box.

CARRIE OLDER
Just drop them back in here.

As he complies...

CARRIE OLDER(contd)
You were sweet to help me.

He turns to her and she sees the stains.

CARRIE OLDER(contd)
You've dirtied your shirt. I'm sorry.

PAUL OLDER
When I was under the hood, I couldn't resist fooling around with it. Like I was sitting in it yesterday.

PAUL YOUNGER
And her on my lap.

She wets a cloth.

PAUL OLDER
Now that brings back memories.

CARRIE OLDER
(Surprised)
With me?

PAUL OLDER
My mother.

(A smile)
She kept me well groomed. Used to look for nits in my hair when I came home from school.

CARRIE OLDER
(A slight smile)
I wasn't very much like her, was I.

PAUL OLDER

(Laughs)

More like natural enemies, I'd say.

The older Carrie returns with the wet cloth and faces him.

CARRIE OLDER

Let's compare my technique to hers.

She attempts to clean off the dirt. This first physical contact starts something in each. Both younger selves come up close to observe.

PAUL YOUNGER

(To the older Paul)

Am I blind or is she making a pass.

CARRIE YOUNGER

(To the older Carrie)

I can't believe you're doing this.

CARRIE OLDER

I think the marks are disappearing.

The rubbing has become more of a gentle stroke, even a caress and he is uneasy...not that he dislikes it.

CARRIE YOUNGER

(To the older Carrie)

He's repressed. Can't you tell? He thinks every girl is his mother.

CARRIE OLDER

It's a beautiful shirt. Such a soft material.

PAUL YOUNGER

She's much more experienced. She never did that to me.

CARRIE YOUNGER

(Insistent)

Ease up, girl.

The older Carrie pays no mind. Paul is getting red faced. And the younger Carrie more impatient.

PAUL YOUNGER

(To the older Paul)

I think this is getting out of hand.

CARRIE OLDER

Would you like to take your shirt off? It'd be so much easier.

PAUL OLDER

((Nervously)

No need to. It's almost all gone now. Thanks. Thanks very much.

He goes to his jacket and puts it on.

PAUL OLDER(contd)

I'm glad I came by.

(Hesitates)

It's been good seeing you.

He picks up his attache case.

CARRIE YOUNGER

There he goes, Carrie. 'Bye, 'bye.

CARRIE OLDER

You just got here. Stay awhile.

PAUL OLDER

I really have to leave.

CARRIE YOUNGER

What are you going to do now? He's already fixed your car.

PAUL OLDER

I have some business to look after.

PAUL YOUNGER

(To the older Paul)

You've also got thirty years to talk about. What's there to lose? Stay awhile.

PAUL OLDER

(To the younger Paul)

Will you make up your mind? First you're pushing me out. Now you're pulling back in.

PAUL YOUNGER

It was always like that.

CARRIE OLDER
I could make some dinner.

PAUL OLDER
Please. Don't bother.

CARRIE OLDER
I've become a terrific cook. Do you like rack of lamb?

He becomes aware that she is
studying him intently.

PAUL OLDER
Thanks but I'm not that hungry. It's very kind of you.

CARRIE OLDER
I make it medium rare. It saves the juices.

She moves to one side, still
studying him.

PAUL YOUNGER
(To the older Paul)
Watch out. She's up to something.

CARRIE YOUNGER
(To the older Carrie)
Go to it, hon. Go for broke..or he's gone.

PAUL OLDER
(To the older Carrie)
Is something the matter?

CARRIE OLDER
Do me a favor. Just look this way.

She moves to him, takes his
attache case and puts it aside,
still staring at his head.

CARRIE OLDER(contd)
This'll just take a second.

She turns his head to the side.

PAUL OLDER
What are you doing?

CARRIE OLDER
Hush. Now let me see your right profile.

Carrie...
PAUL OLDER

Please. This is important.
CARRIE OLDER

Now she steps back and stares at him.

CARRIE OLDER
Once more to the right....good.....now to the left.
(excitedly)
You're perfect for it. Why didn't I see it before?

See what? What are you doing?
PAUL OLDER

She turns his head to other side.

CARRIE OLDER
I don't know why I didn't spot it right away. It must have been the excitement of seeing you again.

PAUL YOUNGER
(Dismayed..to his older self)
I don't believe this. She's pulling the old femme fatale bit.

Poor man. He's a dead duck.
CARRIE YOUNGER

Your head.
CARRIE OLDER
(The dramatic moment)

He instinctively places his hands there.

My head?
PAUL OLDER

He glances quickly around for a mirror and hurries to it.

What's wrong with it?
PAUL OLDER(contd)

Nothing. That's just it. It's exactly what I've been looking for.
CARRIE OLDER

She comes up behind him and they both stare into the mirror.

CARRIE OLDER(contd)

I want you to model for me. I've got an important new commission.

The younger Paul groans.

CARRIE OLDER

I'm doing a sculpture for the plaza of a new office building. About American industry. I need someone who's mature but whose face is still turned to the future.

PAUL OLDER

You really want my head?

CARRIE OLDER

When's the last time you looked at yourself? Don't you know what's there? The strength, the vision, the wisdom?

PAUL YOUNGER

(to the older Paul)

The woman has no shame.

PAUL OLDER

(Aside to his younger self)

Will you shut up!

The older man turns to look at her. Is she giving him the business?

CARRIE OLDER

What do you say?

PAUL OLDER

But I'm a banker.

CARRIE OLDER

No one'll know. Complete confidentiality.

He studies himself in the mirror again.

PAUL OLDER

You see all those things?

CARRIE OLDER

An artist always sees past the surface.

PAUL OLDER

And you can sculpt it?

CARRIE OLDER

It won't be Mount Rushmore but close.

PAUL YOUNGER

(Sighs)

She means a lamb ready for the slaughter.

PAUL OLDER

(A pause)

How much time would it take?

CARRIE OLDER

For now, I just need a sketch. Then I can go to work on the head. You'll have to come back, of course.

PAUL OLDER

I think I'd feel foolish. It's..it's very vain.

CARRIE OLDER

A little vanity never hurt anyone. Besides, without it most museum walls would be pretty bare. What do you say?

PAUL OLDER

Well, I must admit it's tempting. You know. Eternity and all that.

PAUL YOUNGER

(To the older man)

Get real, will you. It's not a face that launched a thousand ships.

The older man gives his face one last searching look in the mirror.

PAUL OLDER

Well...

CARRIE OLDER

Well, yourself. Is it a go?

PAUL OLDER

All those attributes you're going to put into stone? Maturity, wisdom and all those other perceptive things?

CARRIE OLDER

Every single one of them.

PAUL OLDER

Think you can you manage to throw in a few good looks as well?

CARRIE OLDER

Paul dear, they're already there.

She kisses him and then scurries about preparing her materials. He smiles as he watches her and then slowly removes his jacket.

PAUL OLDER

Just let me make a phone call...and I'm yours.

PAUL YOUNGER

Sucker!

END ACT ONE

ACT TWO

It is an hour later. The younger people are off stage.

The older Paul is seated on a stool and the older Carrie is on a chair a few feet away sketching him. She pauses for a moment then busies herself with a few more strokes then holds the sketch at arms length for a better perspective.

CARRIE OLDER

Not bad. You're a very good subject. Want to take a break?

PAUL OLDER

It's all right. I'm meditating.

CARRIE OLDER

When did that start?

PAUL OLDER

Just a few months ago.

CARRIE OLDER

You with a guru? I can't see it.

She prepares a new set of chalks.

PAUL OLDER

Oh, it wasn't anything like that. This friend of ours studied it after her husband died. Said it gave her some inner peace. After my wife died, I thought I'd give it a try.

CARRIE OLDER

(Resumes sketching)

So that accounts for it.

PAUL OLDER

What?

CARRIE OLDER

That settled look. I thought it was a man at peace with himself.

PAUL OLDER
Well, it could be exhaustion.

CARRIE OLDER
Not you.

PAUL OLDER
No?

CARRIE OLDER
Uh uh, you're moving.

PAUL OLDER
(Resumes his pose)
Sorry.

CARRIE OLDER
You never knew what giving in meant.

PAUL OLDER
Put it down to normal wear and tear.

CARRIE OLDER
Anything special?

PAUL OLDER
You lose count after awhile. Then one day, you find it hard to get out of bed.

(A pause)
The expectations are gone.

She stops sketching and lays down her pad.

CARRIE OLDER
That's a cue for a drink if I ever heard one.

PAUL OLDER
Maybe a glass of wine. Thanks.

CARRIE OLDER
I thought you'd never ask.

She rises and starts for the fridge then remembers the sketch and goes back to turn it over.

CARRIE OLDER(contd)
No peeking 'til I'm finished.

She goes to the fridge and searches through it.

CARRIE OLDER

Damn. I finished the bottle.

PAUL OLDER

I'll go downstairs and get one.

CARRIE OLDER

It's all right. I've got a wine cellar in my bedroom.

As she heads for the bedroom door.

PAUL OLDER

Very thoughtful of you.

CARRIE OLDER

Don't go away.

She exits. He makes a move to see the sketch, hesitates but then as he again decides to look at it, the door opens and his younger self appears.

PAUL YOUNGER

Uh uh.

The older Paul turns away guiltily.

PAUL YOUNGER(contd)

I thought you'd have your clothes off by now.

PAUL OLDER

Don't talk like that.

PAUL YOUNGER

Why not? All models pose naked.

PAUL OLDER

Not this model.

The younger man stretches out comfortably on the couch.

PAUL YOUNGER

I had to worry if they were virgins. What's your excuse?

PAUL OLDER

You ever see me in the shower?

PAUL YOUNGER

I get your point. That could be a turn off.

The younger man looks on with sympathetic concern as his older self grows silent..lost within himself. A pause and then..

PAUL YOUNGER

Has she changed that much?

PAUL OLDER

I see touches...flashes of what she was.

PAUL YOUNGER

That's sad, eh?

PAUL OLDER

No. It's kind of nice.

PAUL YOUNGER

So? Cheer up.

The older self remains silent

PAUL YOUNGER(contd)

(Giving up)

You figure it out.

PAUL OLDER

I feel a sense of betrayal.

PAUL YOUNGER

What're you talking about? She's running all over the place..having the time of her life.

PAUL OLDER

Not Carrie. My wife.

PAUL YOUNGER

Comon, give yourself a break. The poor woman's dead.

PAUL OLDER

You're too young to understand.

PAUL YOUNGER

Copout.

PAUL OLDER

Don't be such a big shot.

PAUL YOUNGER

You can't kid me. You're scared. That's it. Plain and simple.

The older Carrie returns holding out a bottle of champagne.

CARRIE OLDER

Vintage champagne. I've been saving it for a special occasion.

She crosses to a counter near the fridge as the younger Paul rises. He pats his older self on the shoulder.

PAUL YOUNGER

Don't be so hard on yourself.

He exits as Carrie is working on opening the bottle. The older Paul wanders becoming better acquainted with the loft and its sculpture

CARRIE OLDER

It's Dom Perignon.

PAUL OLDER

I'm flattered.

CARRIE OLDER

You should be.

He sees her difficulty opening the bottle and comes up behind her.

PAUL OLDER

Want me to open that?

He reaches around her for the bottle but she holds it away. His arms are now around her and they both freeze the moment as suddenly they are on the edge of something. They stay poised until she breaks the moment.

CARRIE OLDER
It's all right, I can do it. I love the pop.

To cover his embarrassment,
he turns to the stereo collection.
He goes through her records and
finds one that surprises him.

PAUL OLDER
I don't believe this.

CARRIE OLDER
What?

PAUL OLDER
You've kept it.

CARRIE OLDER
I never throw out old records. Some day they might be
valuable.

PAUL OLDER
How often you play this one?

She is being very casual about his
discovery.

CARRIE OLDER
Which is it?

He shows her the label.

CARRIE OLDER(contd)
Funny. I thought I threw that away years ago.
(Wrestling with the bottle)
They must have made this bottle to christen a battleship.

With below, he puts on the record.

PAUL OLDER
If it's the original, there's probably a scratch in the
middle.

There is a hissing as the needle
finds the track and then the first
few bars are heard.

She goes still as the strains of
"Under Paris Skies" are now
recognizable. Paul opens his arms.

Invitation to the dance. PAUL OLDER(contd)

Paul, we've got work to do. CARRIE OLDER

Come! PAUL OLDER

We can't go back. CARRIE OLDER

Try. PAUL OLDER

It was too long ago. CARRIE OLDER

Close your eyes. PAUL OLDER

She hesitates and then she comes
to him.

Promise you won't step on my feet this time. CARRIE OLDER

If you won't hit me with your knees. PAUL OLDER

They begin to dance. It is a
mellow, romantic mood as both are
now slipping into the memory of
the night that the song is
bringing back.

A few moments pass and then the
younger Carrie appears, lovely in
an evening gown. She replaces the
older Carrie in the older man's
arms. They dance until the younger
Paul, in dinner jacket, appears
and replaces his older self. Both
young people are now in the memory
of that long ago evening.

After a few turns around the
floor...

Don't look. CARRIE YOUNGER

What's the matter? PAUL YOUNGER

I'm the only one without a corsage. CARRIE YOUNGER

I thought you didn't believe in flowers and all that "girl stuff." PAUL YOUNGER

I took the night off. CARRIE YOUNGER

Good. PAUL YOUNGER

Makes things easier for you, right? CARRIE YOUNGER

Where we going with that one? (Warily) PAUL YOUNGER

Paul, I don't care about the flowers. Not really. CARRIE YOUNGER

Good. I can breathe again. PAUL YOUNGER

He puts his head next to hers but she pulls back and begins searching for something inside his jacket.

All right, game's over. Where is it? CARRIE YOUNGER

Where's what? (Protesting) PAUL YOUNGER

Didn't you bring it? CARRIE YOUNGER

You're ticking me. Bring what? PAUL YOUNGER

She pulls back.

CARRIE YOUNGER

(Wistful)
It's not there.

PAUL YOUNGER

What's the name of this game?

CARRIE YOUNGER

Dreaming.

PAUL YOUNGER

What do you win?

CARRIE YOUNGER

I was hoping for a steamship ticket.

PAUL YOUNGER

There's a hint in there somewhere.

CARRIE YOUNGER

The Queen Mary sails next week for the last time. Don't you hear the music? I asked them to play it.

PAUL YOUNGER

I don't think that's our song.

CARRIE YOUNGER

It has to be because we're going to live in Paris.

PAUL YOUNGER

We're back to that, are we?

CARRIE YOUNGER

We never left. Not if I'm going to be a sculptor.

PAUL YOUNGER

Honey, be real. Please? What do I do over there? Teach english to french kids?

CARRIE YOUNGER

If we stay here, it's life by the numbers. You go into your father's bank...I have children and in ten years I go see a shrink because I'm depressed.

PAUL YOUNGER

Hey, I love the idea of Paris. For a honeymoon maybe. After that, we come home. Here. Where we belong.

CARRIE YOUNGER

You ever think maybe there's something else you'd rather do. Why not try?

PAUL YOUNGER

What for? I like what I have now. I'm comfortable.

They stop dancing

CARRIE YOUNGER

False pretenses.

PAUL YOUNGER

You know something? I'm getting a little confused. What do you mean..false pretenses.

CARRIE YOUNGER

That night I fell down the stairs and you swept me off the sidewalk?

PAUL YOUNGER

Little did I know what I was getting into.

CARRIE YOUNGER

Neither did I. You said it was romantic.

PAUL YOUNGER

It was wonderful. We didn't meet cute. We met great.

CARRIE YOUNGER

What happened to it all?

PAUL YOUNGER

Forget that. You want to hear something nice? Really immense?

(A pause)

Marry me?

CARRIE YOUNGER

You don't even see it, do you?

PAUL YOUNGER

There's an open question on the floor.

CARRIE YOUNGER

I can't be what I am or want to be. You won't let me. It's only what you expect. I'm right, aren't I?

PAUL YOUNGER

Tie the knot...walk down the aisle...I climb in through your window or fall off the ladder and break my neck. What's your pleasure?

CARRIE YOUNGER

I'm afraid. I really am. And that surprises you. The truth is, I'm afraid you're going to stop me.

PAUL YOUNGER

(Quietly)

I want good things for us. I'd like you happy but each day, more and more, all I see is you slipping away and I don't how to stop it.

(Closer)

We used to talk about the future. The house in the country...our children. I even remember one night you said...four daughters.

CARRIE YOUNGER

Not in my wildest dreams and I've had a few.

PAUL YOUNGER

Honey, I heard you.

CARRIE YOUNGER

Paul, it's grotesque.

He tries to hold her but she resists and he lets her slip away.

CARRIE YOUNGER(contd)

I'm sorry. I'm so very sorry.

The scratched portion of the record is reached and becomes stuck, as he had described it. Carrie Older suddenly rises. She and the older Paul have been in an upper corner, ostensibly working on the sketch but their thoughts have been in the memory scene we have just seen played.

CARRIE OLDER

(Sharply)

That's enough!

The two younger selves go offstage.

She crosses to the record player,
lifts the arm and shuts it off.

Paul has risen from the stool
and crosses to her as she stares
down at the record, her back to
him.

PAUL OLDER

I once heard memory described as a miracle. For me, the real
miracle is being able to forget.

She turns.

PAUL OLDER(contd)

Except when you forget the wine.

CARRIE OLDER

I agree. That's unforgivable.

She hands him the champagne to
open.

CARRIE OLDER(contd)

Please.

He pops the cork and pours the
wine, handing her one.

PAUL OLDER

Cocktails for two.

CARRIE OLDER

(Raising her glass)

A toast.

PAUL OLDER

To old friends.

CARRIE OLDER

That can't hurt.

The glasses touch and they drink.
Each subsides into silence. Having
been in the far off past, they
seem unable to break free and
communicate about the immediate
past and present.

I was thinking....

PAUL OLDER

Yes? (Looks up)

CARRIE OLDER

Sorry. Didn't mean to interrupt.

PAUL OLDER

You didn't.

CARRIE OLDER

I thought I heard a train of thought go by.

PAUL OLDER

A growing resentment begins.

CARRIE OLDER

There's too much to say.

PAUL OLDER

You're defying a law of nature.
(Slight pause)

You haven't asked about my wife.

CARRIE OLDER

Fair enough. Who did you marry?

PAUL OLDER

I don't think you ever knew her.

CARRIE OLDER

Then I'm at a double disadvantage. I try not to speak ill of the dead.

PAUL OLDER

Don't let me inhibit you.

CARRIE OLDER

Did you love her?

PAUL OLDER

I tried to.

CARRIE OLDER

No need to apologize.

PAUL OLDER

She was a lovely person. Loyal. Faithful.

CARRIE OLDER

How nice. And how dull.

PAUL OLDER

(A note of repressed pain)

Please.

She turns to him.

PAUL OLDER(contd)

(A quiet confession)

You weren't there.

She turns aside and then
refills her glass.

CARRIE OLDER

I find this helps my arthritis. It's in my wrist.

She massages it.

CARRIE OLDER(contd)

An occupational disease.

PAUL OLDER

(Indicates the champagne)

That's an expensive therapy.

CARRIE OLDER

It's in my lower back too.

PAUL OLDER

I've got it in my knees. Not that I lived on them.

She indicates to the bottle.

CARRIE OLDER

Help yourself to the anaesthetic.

He complies as she plunks down
into a chair.

PAUL OLDER

I think it's time we crossed the great divide.

CARRIE OLDER

A mutual suicide pact? Just because we've got arthritis?

PAUL OLDER

If my post mortem is finished, it's your turn. Under FCC rules, I'm entitled to equal time.

CARRIE OLDER

My life won't take very long.

PAUL OLDER

I'm sure it's been very exciting, glamorous. After all, you've made a great success. I'd always meant to write and say how proud you made me.

She takes another sip, stares at him and then...

CARRIE OLDER

What stopped you? Afraid of Mother? She talked you out of me, didn't she?

(Slight pause)

Sorry. That was unkind.

PAUL OLDER

It really didn't happen, you know.

She looks up.

PAUL OLDER(contd)

Like a lot of other things. I think she even admired you. Your free spirit.

CARRIE OLDER

(Challenging)

You've known about me. What my life has been.

PAUL OLDER

I spoke to people.

Their looks hold and then she moves away.

PAUL OLDER (contd)

How long did you wait?

CARRIE OLDER

For what?

PAUL OLDER

To marry.

CARRIE OLDER
 (Accusingly)
 Twelve years.

He whistles in surprise.

CARRIE OLDER
 (Annoyed)
 What's the whistle?

PAUL OLDER
 (Noncommittal)
 Nothing.

She rises, looks at the mobile
 then quietly sets it in motion.
 Her back is to him.

CARRIE OLDER
 I suppose we were so busy listening to ourselves...we never
 listened to each other.

Again abruptly, she goes back to
 her seat and opens the sketch
 book. She hesitates.

CARRIE OLDER(contd)
 Your head's going to be hanging around here for a few
 months. Any second thoughts?

PAUL OLDER
 I don't mind. You'll have someone to talk with. Remember all
 the things we wanted to say. All the questions we never got
 to ask...or answer.

CARRIE OLDER
 What's the use. The past is always a lie. All we do is keep
 inventing ourselves.

PAUL OLDER
 I wish I could have done more. Not worked so hard, lived in
 other places, small mundane things...compared to what I
 really missed.
 (Slight pause)
 Not having you.

There is a pause as she moves away
 from him.

CARRIE OLDER

Way back then, I wanted my life and the dumb thing is I thought I knew what that was. I always felt that if there was something you needed, then do it. Waiting is always too late.

She closes the sketch book.

CARRIE OLDER

(Emphatically)

This was a rotten idea. I'm sorry. It didn't work out. It's a..

She casts about for the right word.

PAUL OLDER

A bummer.

CARRIE OLDER

In spades.

PAUL OLDER

But you wrote me.

CARRIE OLDER

Spur of the moment. That was my trouble, you said.

PAUL OLDER

I still came.

CARRIE OLDER

(Resisting)

It's no good. We know each other's secrets.

PAUL OLDER

(Quietly)

Dreams.

He turns away in a moment of sad reflection. She looks at him as if wanting to hold and comfort him.

CARRIE OLDER

Paul?

He turns.

CARRIE OLDER(contd)

About my commission for the sculpture...

He waits.

CARRIE OLDER(contd)
...there is none. I just wanted you to stay.

PAUL OLDER
I knew that. When you lie, the side of your mouth always curls up just this little.

They smile at their confessions.
A moment goes by and their two young selves enter.

The older Paul comes to the older Carrie.

PAUL OLDER
I stayed...because I wanted to be here.
(Slight pause)
I loved being young with you.

She kisses him gently. They fall silent. Now, he goes to the door where he is joined by the younger man.

Paul?

CARRIE OLDER

He stops.

CARRIE OLDER(contd)
Did I really say that? About having four daughters?

PAUL OLDER
(A slight smile)
I really don't remember.

There is a long look and he goes, followed by young Paul who closes the door. The young Carrie enters and stands near her older self as if to offer quiet support.

The older Carrie waits a moment and then goes to the sketch book. She opens it and looks at her drawing.

A portrait of the younger Paul appears on the scrim. As the lights fade to darkness, the door chimes sound once more.

It is a few days later. Carrie enters. Her clothing has changed. She crosses toward the door.

CARRIE OLDER

Yes?

(No reply)

Who's there?

She opens the door to its chain length and peers out. No one is visible. As she is about to close the door she sees something on the floor and picks it up. It is a box of flowers. Bringing it inside, she extracts a lovely corsage. As she reads the note, we hear.....

PAUL OLDER (o.s.)

I remember you.

The lights fade and a spot comes up on a bust of the older Paul.

CURTAIN